



I'm always happy to meet with students who visit our state Capitol, like these fourth-grade students from Horace Porter School in Columbia during their visit in May.

## Aid For Our Towns

A very important part of my job representing the people of the 19th state Senate District is ensuring Norwich, Montville, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Hebron, Columbia, Franklin, Andover, Bozrah and Sprague receive their fair share of state funding. The following grants and reimbursements from the state are in the Fiscal Year 2008–2009 budget:

	Fiscal Year 08-09
Total Education Grants	\$85,947,046
Town Aid Road Fund Grant	\$1,343,011
Mashantucket Pequot & Mohegan Fund Grant	\$6,985,449
Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP)	\$886,198
Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)	\$2,983,573
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$98,145,276</b>

## State Funding Planned for Playscapes in Norwich, Columbia and Montville

On May 30th, the State Bond Commission approved the release of \$150,000 to underwrite planned playscape projects in Norwich, Columbia and Montville. The towns will receive \$50,000 each to build these playground facilities at the Bishop School in Norwich, Columbia Elementary School and a new school in Montville. These nominal state investments for primary school playscapes will pay dividends for many years to come in the form of healthy, well-rounded children, and in the form of children who will remember and appreciate them as adults.



## Funding for 4-H Camp

In March, the State Bond Commission released \$250,000 for New London County's 4-H in Franklin. The camp, which was founded 60 years ago, provides campers with an outdoor group living experience on its scenic 24-acre site to help them grow toward self development, environmental awareness and a concern for health and safety. This state funding is needed to upgrade the site's plumbing infrastructure and replace kitchen and bathroom facilities. This chapter of 4-H USA is actively engaged in our community, developing in its members the 4-H building blocks of leadership, proficiency, good citizenship through public service, and life skills through hands-on experience.



Dear Neighbor:

By almost any measure, the nation is in a recession, and states across America are feeling the effects.

Connecticut faces these uncertain times with a biennial budget that still provides important investments in local schools, roads, health care, municipal aid, and criminal justice programs.

However, state revenue forecasts continue to drop, and just as Connecticut's families are tightening their belts, so must our state government. While we held the line on any new spending during this past legislative session, we were able to find ways to help the people of our state by enacting long-needed reforms in our criminal justice system, consumer protection, and the environment.

As always, I welcome your input and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Edith Prague  
State Senator

## Fighting the High Cost of Gasoline & Energy

We all know that the cost of fuel is sky-high. While we can't stop fuel prices from rising, we can prevent tax increases from further driving up the cost. This June, we said NO to a scheduled increase in the gross receipts tax, which applies to gasoline. We're also taking action to help seniors and working families survive the high cost of the looming home heating oil season.



# State Senator Edith Prague

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I'm proud to  
represent the  
19th Senate District:  
**Norwich • Montville**  
**Lebanon • Ledyard**  
**Lisbon • Hebron**  
**Columbia • Franklin**  
**Andover • Bozrah**  
**Sprague**

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State Senator  
**Edith Prague**  
19TH DISTRICT

## LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

### Protecting Homeowners & Our Economy

This year, I supported comprehensive legislation designed to keep families in their homes and protect our state's economy from the national subprime mortgage crisis. Across the country, quality of life is being diminished, home values are plummeting, and families are faced with difficult choices as home foreclosure rates have skyrocketed 75 percent since 2006.



Connecticut has one of the highest home foreclosure rates in the country. About 71,000 Connecticut mortgages are adjustable-rate, high-interest subprime mortgages, and 21,000 of those will reset to a higher rate in the next 12 months.

The legislation we passed created a special loan program which allows the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) to purchase home loans from lenders and place eligible borrowers on affordable payment schedules for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages. We also re-initiated the state's Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program and gave CHFA the authority to purchase foreclosed homes to create affordable and supportive housing. These programs will help thousands of Connecticut families and will help prevent the mass foreclosures other states have experienced over the past year.

Additionally, we created a foreclosure mediation program for lenders and borrowers, established a mortgage crisis job training team, and created new restrictions and licensing requirements for mortgage lenders and brokers to prevent predatory lending practices in the future. All these initiatives were created without increasing state spending.



### Tougher Requirements, Education for Teen Drivers

Communities across the state are grieving over the loss of young lives in tragic automobile accidents. The General Assembly made several changes this year to help prevent fatal accidents involving teenage drivers and passengers. Teens are now required to spend more time behind the wheel before they can get a driver's license, and they cannot drive with passengers under age 18 who are not immediate family for a year. Teens will also face harsh penalties—including license suspensions—for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, reckless driving, speeding, street racing and using a cell phone while driving.

### Lowering Health Care Costs for Municipalities and Small Businesses

This legislative session we tried to tackle one of the biggest issues driving up our property taxes—health care costs for our cities and towns. The Connecticut Healthcare Partnership would have allowed municipalities, small businesses and nonprofits to voluntarily join the state employee health insurance plan. By expanding this large pool of insured, we would have increased bargaining power and lowered costs for municipalities. Not only would this have benefited property tax payers, but it would have also benefited small businesses—they create the vast majority of jobs in Connecticut, but are hit the hardest when it comes to skyrocketing health care costs. As of this writing, the governor has indicated that she will veto this bill, which could have leveled the playing field and helped employers and families afford quality health care coverage.

### Raising the Minimum Wage

The General Assembly passed legislation to increase the state minimum hourly wage from \$7.65 to \$8.00 beginning January 1, 2009 and to \$8.25 beginning January 1, 2010. The increase would have benefited nearly 65,000 low-income workers in our state and provided them with some financial relief from the rising cost of living. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed this bill.



### Global Warming Solutions

Connecticut has once again shown that it is a leader in environmental protection with the passage of a bill that creates a timeline and targets through 2050 for Connecticut to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. *An Act Concerning Connecticut Global Warming Solutions* unanimously passed the Senate after overwhelming passage in the House. The new law requires Connecticut to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to at least 10 percent below 1990 levels by January 1, 2020, and to at least 80 percent below 2001 levels by January 1, 2050. It is estimated that in 1990, Connecticut emitted 45 million metric tons of greenhouse gases. Most of these gases are the result of burning fossil fuels for transportation, though electric generation and residential energy use also contribute heavily.



### Seniors Receiving Care at Home

Many seniors who require long-term care would prefer to receive that care in their own home or with a relative caregiver. For many, that is not an option due to Medicaid reimbursement rules. A federal program called 'Money Follows the Person' allows Medicaid funds to 'follow the patient' from nursing homes to more personalized settings. The state program can currently enroll 700 seniors, but we expanded the program to accommodate up to 5,000. The state's reimbursement rate for those in the program will climb from 50 to 75 percent for each enrollee. Most seniors prefer home care when complete independence is no



longer possible, and this federal/state partnership grants that wish. The expansion of this program begins on July 1st.

### Prohibiting Unfair Nursing Home Fees

Under existing law, cable and telephone companies and nursing home operators can charge their residents installation fees if they move from one room to another in the same facility. This practice is unfair to nursing home residents, who are frequently asked or forced to change rooms and who then have to pay these fees. Our seniors often live on limited means, and nursing home residents should not have to worry about a heavy charge from their phone or cable company when asked to change rooms. I introduced and fought for legislation that makes it illegal for a nursing home or a service provider to charge these fees when a resident moves to a different room in the same facility.

#### FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF SENIORS

I worked hard again this year to increase the staffing levels in our nursing homes. We came very close to being able to accomplish this, but unfortunately the downturn in the economy affected the state budget in ways that conspired against our ability to make these much-needed changes. As you know, issues concerning seniors continue to be a high priority for me.

